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D-11 urged to adopt policy on morality

Family Values puts spotlight on teen sex

By **Wendy Y. Lawton**
Gazette Telegraph

The same group that brought the issue of gay rights all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court is back with a new cause — the sexual conduct of students.

Colorado for Family Values wants the Colorado Springs School District 11 board to adopt a policy which promotes abstinence, affirms traditional marriage and discourages promiscuity in "every aspect of student life."

The proposal comes in response to a monthslong controversy over articles about homosexuality published in a high school newspaper.

Perkins: Spearheading campaign.

While the school board has tried to keep the public focused on freedom of the press, the debate has ranged from family values to homophobia to separation of church and state. The CFV proposal puts the spotlight on another element — the sweeping issue of teens and sex.

CFV has mounted a massive campaign. Will Perkins, chairman of the CFV board, said the group has printed 130,000 postcards calling on the school board to pass the student conduct policy.

Perkins said about 100 local churches are behind the effort, distributing the pre-printed cards to members. Focus on the Family, the Christian publishing ministry headquartered in the city, is also behind the campaign.

For the first time, Focus preempted its national radio broadcast in Colorado Springs on Tuesday and devoted 30 minutes to the issue. Founder James Dobson urged listeners on four local stations to write the school board in support of the policy.

Perkins said backers are trying to get thousands of people to show up at a school board meeting Wednesday. Expecting a crowd, District 11 officials have moved the 6 p.m. meeting, traditionally held in an administration building board room, to the Wasson High School auditorium. The auditorium seats 1,100.

What triggered all this were two articles in the Oct. 24 edition of The Lever, the Palmer High School newspaper. One article was a front-page story detailing the troubles faced by gay teens. Another was an editorial defending same-sex marriages. Both were written by Palmer students.

At the time, the stories didn't cause much of a stir. But after a few complaints and a lot of pub-

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puts station at risk

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Outer space is littered with so many perils — meteors, man-made debris and lethal cosmic rays — that travelers aboard the international space station face a serious risk of being hit, scientists warned Wednesday.

The first pieces of the 460-ton station are due to go into orbit this fall. But unless improvements are made, the odds are better than 50-50 that one of the thousands of tiny, almost invisible objects hurtling through space will penetrate its shell during its 15-year projected life span, the scientists estimated.

A collision with a larger object is less likely but could be "catastrophic," according to a report by a committee of the National Research Council.

Another panel with the National Research Council cautioned last month that high-energy particles from the sun and distant galaxies could endanger astronauts attempting to reach Mars early in the next century.

The space station committee, headed by George Gleghorn, a retired vice president of the TRW Space & Technology Group, praised the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's safety efforts as "extensive and thorough."

But the report cautioned that, because of its greater size and length of stay in space, the station will be much more vulnerable to collisions than the existing space shuttles.

The committee said the station faces "a significant risk of being struck by potentially damaging meteoroids or orbital debris." At least a half dozen scientists and crew members are to be on board the station at any given time after its completion in 2002.

A meteor striking the ship at speeds up to 150,000 miles an hour could crack open its shell, causing it to "unzip" or break apart, the report said.

Less-violent impacts could send metal chips ricocheting around the crew quarters, injuring or killing people or wrecking vital systems. There could also be intense flashes of light, shock waves and fire. Fuel tanks and solar panels might also be damaged, the report said.

The report was requested by NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin, who wanted outside experts to evaluate risks to the station, a joint U.S-Russian-Canadian-European-Japanese project. The first section will be boosted into orbit by the Russians in November, followed by the first American component in December.

The National Research Council committee called for stronger aluminum, ceramic or plastic shielding on the outside of the station. It said such shields could protect against flying objects up to four-tenths of an inch in diameter.

It also urged the Defense Department to continue to monitor larger objects approaching the space station. The military space surveillance network can pick up objects greater than four inches across in time to provide at least six hours of warning.

CORRECTIONS

The Gazette Telegraph strives to

Student/Articles triggered conduct proposal

From A1

licity, that changed. Within a week, the D-11 school board decided to rethink its policy covering student publications. More than a 100 people packed a board meeting in November, mostly to support The Lever articles.

Then, in an unusual move, board members asked the public to weigh in on the publications policy. The latest draft still gives student editors the right to decide the content of school newspapers.

As it stands now, the school board will hold a two-hour hearing Wednesday on the publication proposal. It's unknown how the CFV measure will fit into the debate, but it has the potential to expand it well beyond what students put in their newspapers.

Perkins acknowledges that the policy is designed to cover just what it says — "every aspect of student life." That means what students discuss and what teachers teach in class about sex and marriage, he said.

For Perkins, the heart of the matter is giving kids moral guidance about sex.

"There is so much empirical evidence out there about the dangers of promiscuity — sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy," Perkins said. "Kids need to know that. They need guidance."

For Frank Whitworth, head of the gay rights group Ground Zero, the real issue is repression of homosexual teens.

"The deeper, underlying thing is about denying gay and lesbian teens protection from physical and verbal abuse," he said. "People want to stop homosexuals from being who they are."

Said school board member Lyman Kaiser: "People are coming at this from all different directions. It's all based on their moral and political beliefs."

Yet there is some agreement among a broad range of people interviewed Wednesday.

Everyone — from school board members to religious leaders to local activists — said abstinence is the best policy when it comes to kids and sex. That's already the tack District 11 takes in its sex ed courses.

So can this three-month controversy end in consensus?

Megan Day, director of Citizens Project, said all parties could find common ground – if the rhetoric and political pouring subside.

"Oftentimes, we have the same goals. We all want to reduce teen pregnancy. And who would promote promiscuity?" Day said. "It's just that our means are different. If we didn't focus on our perceived differences, and instead focused on what we have in common, we could get somewhere."

ear, set with stones unique
o the month of her birthday.
Garnets always make
a beautiful gift and add
a personal touch when
given in January. Genuine
garnets adorn earrings and
pendants set in 14kt. gold
with diamond accents.

PREVIEW 9th & 10th
10:00 to 3:00

Oak cases, tables, counters, chairs,
clothing racks, desks, oak paneling,
mannequins and more.
Most fixtures are from 1892 & 1914.
This 50,000 sq ft store is unchanged
since 1914.
Some items have minimums. Payment
due day of sale.
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